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## Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

**Summary record of the 7th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 11 October 2004, at 10 a.m.

*Chairman*: Mr. Kyaw Tint Swe ..... (Myanmar)

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Agenda item 74: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

**Agenda item 74: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space** (A/59/20)

1. **The Chairman** commented that, over the past year, some countries had indicated their intention of resuming manned exploratory flights to the Moon, impressive coloured images of Mars had been received from two United States space missions to that planet and the spacecraft of the European Space Agency (ESA) had confirmed the presence of water ice at the south polar cap of Mars.

2. The current year marked the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and other Celestial Bodies. The United Nations had played a central role in establishing the international legal regime governing activities in outer space. United Nations treaties on outer space emphasized that such activities must benefit humanity and that it was essential to expand international cooperation in that sphere.

3. The peaceful use of outer space could significantly promote the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the decisions adopted at two World Summits: on sustainable development and on the information society. Examples of the benefits that humanity could derive from the application of space technology included remote sensing of the Earth for development needs, the inclusion of remote regions in the education system by means of tele-education employing space-based communications, telemedicine, and the forecasting of natural disasters and disaster relief.

4. The United Nations, through the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, played a pivotal role in broadening international cooperation in order that the fruits of activities in outer space reached people all over the world. Thirty-seven States representing all the continents were currently participating in the COSPAS-SARSAT International Satellite Search and Rescue System (SASR), thanks to which more than 17,000 victims of almost 5,000 accidents had been saved since 1982. More than 50 States, the European Commission and almost 30 international organizations were taking part in the work of the Group on Earth Observations, which was in the process of devising systems to permit the continuous monitoring of the state of the planet and enhance prediction of the Earth system.

5. **Mr. Abiodun** (Nigeria), Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, said that that Committee served as a multilateral forum for the exchange of ideas and for the taking of decisions that shaped the policies of countries and international organizations engaged in space-related activities. In the decision-making process, the Committee successfully adhered to the principle of consensus and, largely thanks to that principle, it counted among its accomplishments five international treaties and five sets of legal principles.

6. In addition, the Committee had been instrumental in organizing three conferences on outer space, the most recent of which, the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III), which had been held in 1999, had seen the adoption of the document entitled "The Space Millennium: Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development". That document set out measures for employing space technology to solve some of the most vital development issues: the protection of the Earth's environment, support for disaster management, the correct management of the Earth's natural resources, the promotion of global health and education, the protection of the space environment and the strengthening and repositioning of space activities in the United Nations system.

7. In resolution 58/90 of 9 December 2003, the General Assembly had requested the Committee to submit its report on the review of the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III. That report was contained in document A/59/174 and the review itself would be considered by the Assembly in plenary meeting on 20 December. In that connection, the Office for Outer Space Affairs had organized an exhibition at United Nations Headquarters.

8. Introducing the Committee's annual report (A/59/20), he said that, under a three-year work plan, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had begun to consider the issue of space-system-based telemedicine and it intended to prepare bilateral and multilateral projects to further the development of the appropriate applications, especially in developing countries. The Subcommittee had also considered the pace of work on the implementation of an integrated space-based global natural disaster management

system, the urgent necessity for which had been demonstrated, in particular, by the devastating consequences of hurricanes "Ivan" and "Jeanne". Starting in 2005, the Subcommittee would be including the question of space-system-based disaster management support in a multi-year work plan. In 2004, the Subcommittee had established a working group to consider comments from Member States on the proposals regarding space debris mitigation put forward by the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee. Further progress had been made on the drafts of documents A/AC.105/L.253 and L.254 concerning nuclear power source applications in outer space. In addition, the Subcommittee had proposed the inclusion of two new items in its agenda: "Near-Earth objects", to be considered under a three-year work plan and "Support to proclaim the year 2007 International Geophysical and Heliophysical Year".

9. The Legal Subcommittee had made appreciable progress in work on the question of the status and application of the five United Nations treaties on outer space. In particular, the Working Group concerned had agreed on the text of a draft General Assembly resolution on the application of the concept of the "launching State". The Subcommittee had made further headway with the examination of the preliminary draft protocol on matters specific to space assets to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment. In that context, in keeping with General Assembly resolution 58/89 of 9 December 2003, the Subcommittee had considered the possibility of the United Nations serving as supervisory authority under the preliminary draft protocol and the relationship between the terms of that draft protocol and the rights and obligations of States under the legal regime applicable to outer space. The Subcommittee had likewise set up a working group to consider matters related to the definition and delimitation of outer space. Furthermore, the Subcommittee had begun to discuss a new agenda item on the practice of States and international organizations in registering space objects and at its forty-fourth session it would be establishing a working group on the subject.

10. Having reviewed the achievements stemming from the use of spin-off benefits from space technology, the Committee had agreed that the exploitation of such spin-offs should be encouraged, since they stimulated economic growth through the creation of new and innovative technologies and helped to raise the standard of living. Space and education had formed the focus of the debate on space and society, at which a number of reports from regional centres of space science and technology had been heard.

11. Under the item on space and water, which had been included on the Committee's agenda for the first time, it had been noted that space technology could contribute to improved water-resource management and that space data significantly promoted international cooperation in the development and rational use of water resources.

12. In response to the interest shown by Member States in the application of space technology to archaeology, the Committee had decided to hold a symposium on that subject at its next session.

13. The Committee had decided to recommend to the General Assembly that the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Thailand should become members of the Committee and it had also agreed that every regional group must positively encourage Committee members which were also members of the respective regional group to participate in the Committee's work and that of its subsidiary organs. It had also decided that the members of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities should be alerted to the issue of greater participation by the entities and organs in the United Nations system in the work of the Committee and its two Subcommittees.

14. In 2004, as in the previous five years, the Committee had been extremely active and it was prepared to pursue its endeavours to make it possible to use space technologies and their benefits on Earth.

15. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, despite the establishment of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications in 1971, the gap between developing and developed countries was still widening and many countries did not have the human, technical and financial resources needed for space-related activities even in such key areas as meteorology, communications and natural-resource management.

16. Since the establishment of the Iranian Space Agency in 2003, his country had played an active role in enhancing regional and international cooperation. In May 2004, an international seminar on the use of space technology for environmental safety, disaster

rehabilitation and sustainable development had been held in Teheran and an international seminar on satellite technology applications in communications and remote sensing, organized by the Iranian Space Agency together with the Inter-Islamic Network on Space Sciences and Technology (ISNET), was currently taking place in Teheran. Another salient example was the active participation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the realization of the Asia-Pacific project to build a small, multi-mission satellite.

17. His country strongly supported the Committee's active involvement in the international quest for optimum scientific and technical solutions to water-resource problems, especially those such as water management in arid and semi-arid regions, monitoring the pollution of water resources, monitoring wetland environments, the mitigation of the effects of extreme water-related events and the scientific understanding of the natural water cycle.

18. Space technology also played an important role in reducing the danger of natural disasters. His country strongly supported the proposal to set up an ad hoc expert group within the framework of the Committee to study the prevention of disasters and the alleviation of their consequences. It was itself prepared to participate actively in that initiative and it urged Member States, through the Office for Outer Space Affairs, to make financial contributions to the support of that group before the end of the year, so that they could be taken into account in the estimated expenditure of the Trust Fund in 2005.

19. **Mr. Tiendrebeogo** (Burkina Faso) commended the action taken by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) in the interests of all humanity and the skill of its Chairman. All countries were interested in the results of those activities and narrow political aims had been replaced by a desire to cooperate and to share legal, scientific and technical knowledge in the sphere in question. His country hoped that that desire would become a reality so that achievements could be consolidated.

20. The developing countries, including those which were not in a position to establish their own space programmes, would always demand that outer space should be used for peaceful purposes for the benefit of all humanity and, in that connection, he underscored the relevance of the fundamental principles of international United Nations treaties and the need to apply them in good faith. The developing countries were particularly attached to regional and international cooperation in that sphere, the importance of which was fully recognized by his country and other West African States.

21. Given the real difficulties experienced by many developing countries which were members of COPUOS to take part regularly in its work, he supported the Committee's decision to study possible ways of enhancing its members' participation.

22. **Mr. Kazykhanov** (Kazakhstan) said that the use of outer space and the active application of space technology for peaceful purposes had had an increasingly positive effect on the overall social and economic progress of many States. Since his country had space facilities in its territory, it was making a major contribution to international space activities and it supported the efforts of the United Nations to further develop international cooperation in that field. His Government had adopted a State programme for the development of space activities in the Republic of Kazakhstan between 2005 and 2007, which laid the foundation for the production of domestic spacecraft. There were plans to build and launch a national geostationary communications and broadcasting satellite, KAZSAT.

23. Kazakhstan was committed to the principle that outer space must be used only for peaceful purposes and participated in a number of international space projects, including projects involving the use of space science and technology to protect the environment.

24. Kazakhstan was an active participant in the Commonwealth of Independent States Interstate Council for space research and use. It had signed an agreement with the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus regarding cooperation in space matters, the primary aim being to combine their efforts to exploit the unique infrastructure of the Baikonur launching site for peaceful purposes. The signatories to the agreement had decided in September 2004 to develop a manned space shuttle "Clipper Zenit".

25. His country believed that environmental protection should be one of the most important areas of international cooperation requiring the application of the achievements of modern space science and technology. For Kazakhstan, which had experienced the reality of a global environmental disaster in the form of the drying-up of the Aral Sea, the possibility of

the use of space science and technology to monitor the environment of the Aral Sea region was of great importance. Although that situation had global dimensions, the international community was not fully aware of the grave ramifications, and the population of that long-suffering region had received only sporadic technical and financial assistance.

26. Another serious social and economic problem for Kazakhstan was the former nuclear testing ground at Semipalatinsk, where some 500 nuclear-weapon tests had been conducted during the global arms race. While Kazakhstan was grateful to the Governments of Japan, the United States of America and other donors for their attention to that pressing problem, it considered that multilateral cooperation could be more effective. The basis for such cooperation was the General Assembly resolution, the potential of which had not been fully used.

27. The issues raised in the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) — remote sensing, environmental monitoring and the use of nuclear power sources in space — were extremely topical. His delegation endorsed the Committee's conclusion regarding the importance of active international cooperation in the use of remote sensing of the earth by satellite, in particular through the exchange of experience and technology, and it appreciated the Committee's contribution to the expansion of the peaceful uses of outer space and the development of space law. The Committee should maintain its leading role in that area.

28. In order to further its integration into international space-related activities, Kazakhstan had ratified a series of international treaties and agreements relating to the exploration and use of outer space.

29. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that the review of progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) would give a new impetus to international cooperation in the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space.

30. **Mr. Qi** Dahai (China) said that, with the steady increase in space activities and the rapid development of space technology, the risk of the militarization of outer space loomed larger. That flew in the face of the principle of the peaceful exploration and use of outer space and would have serious consequences. He called on the international community to intensify efforts to prevent the weaponization of outer space, inter alia, by exploring ways and means of establishing a comprehensive and effective legal mechanism to that end.

31. The draft resolution adopted by COPUOS on the application of the concept of the "launching State" would help countries to observe and apply applicable space treaties in their space activities and would be conducive to the study of practices in on-orbit transfer of ownership of space objects.

32. His Government was closely following the progress in the negotiations on the draft protocol on matters specific to space assets to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment. It welcomed the establishment by the Legal Subcommittee of an open-ended intersessional working group to prepare a report and a draft resolution for consideration by the Subcommittee at its next session, and wished to become a member of that working group. As to the relationship between the draft protocol and the rights and obligations under the legal regime applicable to outer space, he said his delegation believed that for the financing mechanisms set forth in the protocol to play an active role in promoting space activities, the protocol should clearly and explicitly provide that it would not prejudice the rights and obligations of countries under space treaties.

33. His Government attached great importance to the implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) and had actively participated in the relevant action teams. His delegation would make a comprehensive presentation regarding China's activities to implement the recommendations of UNISPACE III when the plenary Assembly took up agenda item 23.

34. In October 2003, China had successfully launched a manned spacecraft, and in May 2004, China's first astronaut, Mr. Yang Liwei, had handed back to the Secretary-General the United Nations flag which he had taken with him on his space voyage. China had also successfully launched Experiment Satellite 1, Nano-Satellite 1, the second satellite in the Double Star project jointly developed by China's National Space Administration and the European Space Agency, the twenty-first and twenty-second

recoverable satellites and the scientific experiment satellite SJ-6.

35. The twelfth United Nations/European Space Agency workshop on basic space science had been held in Beijing in May 2004 and had been attended by about 100 participants from 29 countries. In 2004, in cooperation with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Chinese Government had hosted the ASEAN training course on remote sensing and the training course on space project management in the Asia and Pacific region.

36. His delegation wished to reiterate China's readiness to promote and intensify international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, so that space science and technology and their applications would benefit more countries, especially the developing countries.

*The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.*